



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

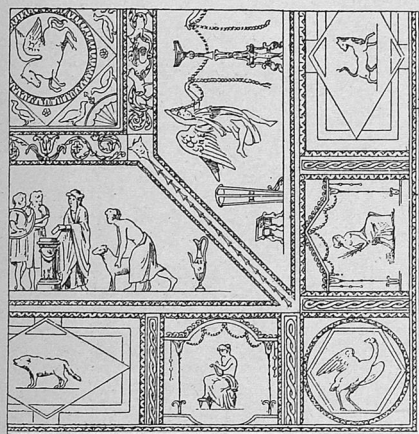
Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



CEILING DECORATION.

IN the ceilings of the houses of the primitive peoples decoration was subordinated to the construction, and it was not attempted to free the arts of painting and sculpture from the imperious laws of architecture, of which they were, in a measure, a part. In Egypt the ceiling was measured by the magnitude of the stones used in the building. The great rooms that we see in Egyptian monuments are broken by enormous columns supporting the roof, a roof formed by slabs of stone extending from one column to another. These apartments, therefore, did not have a ceiling susceptible of the decoration



FRAGMENT OF AN ANCIENT CEILING FOUND AT POMPEII.

that can appropriately be displayed upon one of modern construction, the comparatively small compartments into which it was divided making any large scheme of coloring impossible.

Representations of the heavens or heavenly bodies was a favorite subject for ceilings, as instance, the famous zodiac of Denderah, which was in a small apartment of the temple. The Egyptian monuments do not present us with anything resembling the body of our churches or the large rooms of our palaces, which, being open and wide, are naturally decorated in a free manner. Their ceilings, however, being always formed of many compartments, did not differ in their decoration from the vestibules or other pieces of small work that we are familiar with.

In Greece the system adopted for the decoration of the ceiling was modified necessarily by the difference in their architecture. The interiors, unlike the Egyptian, were not filled with columns supporting stone roofs, they were open to the walls, interrupted above only by rafters or beams, which permitted a ceiling frequently of grand proportions. These beams, crossed by other beams, in which they were jointed, served to carry the roof without the intervention of other supports from side to side. These rafters, whether made of wood or in stone imitating wood, were always exposed to view, and so very perceptibly but not objectionably divided the ceiling into squares, which usually followed the arrangement of the stones on the roof above. The eye of the spectator was thus enabled to take in at a glance the entire decorative scheme.

These ceilings were usually decorated with sculptured work upon the wood or stone, or reproduced in bronze, or even made in ordinary stucco where extreme richness was not called for. That the decoration might appear most natural, those subjects were selected which could be appropriately cut from the beams themselves or attached in a natural manner to the face of the ceiling.

The rose, for instance, was a very popular form of decoration, and is found to have been largely used, possibly because it could take so

many different forms; there are roses with one, two, and even three rows of petals. These petals were round, oblong, or notched, and always grew from a central calix. Later, we think, the ceilings were decorated with heads in relief.

Under the decadence of art the profusion of ornament often changed the character of the architecture. It is shown in the monuments of Baalbek and Palmyra, where we find the ceiling covered with figures in high relief, destroying entirely the lines of any uniform decorative arrangement. All these sculptures give to the edifice a great richness, but in the grand epochs of taste, and especially in Greece, when the Doric order dominated in architecture, the decoration of the ceiling was one of severe simplicity.

Painting at all times joined with sculpture in the adornment of the ceiling, but this does not authorize us to suppose that any of this decoration was formed, as in our time, of important groups, making in themselves a specific subject. The decorative figures employed at that time were isolated or of a character that was each in itself decorative, as foliage, leaves, or twining vines distributed along the beams.

Ancient writers mention no painter who made a specialty of decoration, and thus all indications are that the ancients knew nothing of painting as used in the extensive scale practiced by us in the adornment of vaults and walls. They, doubtless, found it difficult to accustom themselves to the foreshortening necessary in such work when figures were employed, and this prompted them to adopt the floral forms. Picture painting, in our sense of the word, does not appear to have been practiced, and the laws governing a composition in paint did not differ from that in bas-relief.

Stucco was very often employed by the Romans in the decoration of their ceilings, it served for moldings and all sorts of ornamental figures. There have been discovered a large number of edifices where stucco has served in the cornices, and in all the details of the construction. Later, stucco was applied by Raphael in the decoration of the loges of the Vatican, and it has been largely found in the ruins of the Roman days, particularly in those of the Baths of Titus. This latter edifice had a stucco ceiling richly ornamented with small figures in relief, of floral subjects and other appropriate subjects all highly colored. This form of decoration appealed strongly to the taste of the artists of the Italian Renaissance, who made it the base of their system of decoration.

In the Roman houses the apartments were generally quite small, the largest being known as the atrium, and forming the center of the building, being little else than a court surrounded by a portico and open to the sky.

The documents are unfortunately missing, and as the Pompeian houses have nearly all lost their ceilings, we can only judge of their style by the wall paintings which have been recovered. The antique arabesques furnish us an inexhaustible theme of delicious fantasy, floral subjects being combined with the representation of animals, real or fantastic. The colors being always lively and the forms elegant, combinations were sought which were most agreeable to the eye. The paintings of Pompeii offer a great variety of beauties, extravagant animals running among the foliage and alternating with flowers of impossible dimensions; winged horses terminating in enormous scrolls or large leaves, Psyche with butterfly wings flit among the foliage, goats and deer spring about the branches, lions, sphinxes, griffins are combined with tragic and grotesque masks, dolphins carry little winged children, sirens float upon the water, peacocks and birds rest upon the branches.

There are fantastically colored fish, insects alight upon the twisted and contorted stems, little figures stand upon the calix of flowers, dancers are enclosed in graceful frames, cameos are suspended by bright rib-

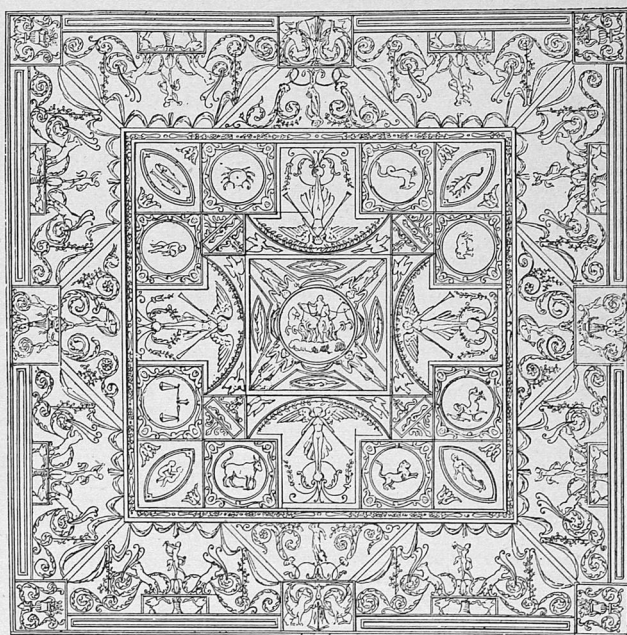
bons, the architecture is bizarre, giving to the decorations the aspect of an imaginary world created for the pleasure of the eyes, neither possible nor logical, but all that is charming and pleasing.

LOUIS XVI DECORATION.

The preference for Louis XVI. decoration, and that of the earlier Italian renaissance has given great impetus to work in relief. Work in relief, however, is by no means confined to these styles. The new apartment house, the Osborne, is literally overlaid with bold work in relief against back grounds of glass mosaics. This relief is brought out in color, and texture is given in some places by an enamel paint which produces the effect of firing. The Osborne work is an extreme case, the greater part of the work in relief adheres to its established characteristics. In one house the deep frieze of the drawing-room and the framework of the doors and windows is in modeled plaster. The ornament is taken from the Italian and is light and graceful. In the frieze it has been stained a pinkish white, carrying up the tint of the wall-hanging of pink brocade. In the wood-work it is ivory lightly touched with gold. In some recent ecclesiastical decoration an Italian gothic style is introduced in the chancel. The ornament, while refined, is very rich and, technically, finely executed. In a newly-built dwelling-house, over the hall are two domes. These are upheld by arches resting on corbels covered with rich bold ornament. This is in plaster, and has been overlaid with gold bronze. The walls below are deep crimson; the domes above, amber glass. From below this color-chord is striking.

This work opens a great field in design for somebody. All this modeling in relief, in its details, is gleaned from varied sources, and all have the stamp of long usages. A study of the decoration shows out of what simple elements these graceful forms were wrought. Many of the motives have no pretensions to beauty in themselves, a small gardening spade for example; but how happily it works in with the gay rural fancies of Louis XVI. decoration. In another Italian bit, a cluster of coins with heads, that of Boccaccio and Marc Antoine being the most conspicuous, is the principal feature. In those days nothing was disdained; why should we be fastidious? Our modern life produces any number of details peculiar to our civilization that could be as skillfully used in ornament; for example, the governor of an engine, a Burden horseshoe, a bicycle, a rocker skate, the pear-shaped drop of the Edison light, a tennis bat, a croquet mallet, the wickets, a baseball club. These are forms in themselves quite as beautiful as those which we find in casts of architectural decoration and which we so gladly copy, and, in fact, they can be used in the same way.

TOILET bottles are covered with woven ribbons in bright colors, in flat chequered form, finished off round neck with band and bow.



ANCIENT POMPEIAN CEILING.